



News Release ~ Communiqué

Secretary of State Finestone launches initiative for better understanding among athletes

GRANDE PRAIRIE, Alta., Feb. 24, 1995 - Member of Parliament John Harvard (Winnipeg-St. James) today launched, on behalf of Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women) Sheila Finestone, an Anti-Racism Program Initiative which emphasizes that inclusiveness and fair play are vital to the integrity of sports.

In urging Canadian athletes to understand and respect each other, Mrs. Finestone's message stated: "Peace, prosperity and social harmony do not come about from wishful thinking. They can only come about from hard work, determination, and good will."

The message was directed at the 3,500 athletes, coaches and managers who are participating in the XV Canada Games in Grande Prairie. With every province and territory represented, the Games provide a unique opportunity to the athletes, their coaches and managers to get to know Canadians from every region and from diverse ethnicities.

The Canada Games Council and Fair Play Canada have developed an Anti-Racism Program with financial assistance from the Multicultural Program, Department of Canadian Heritage. The objective is to raise awareness about racism and to promote respect for people of different backgrounds. A key message for the coaches and managers is that it is their responsibility to positively influence young Canadian athletes.

Following the racial and sexist comments that some athletes directed at young Aboriginal performers during the 1993 Canada Games in Kamloops, B.C., the government made a commitment to develop an anti-racism educational program aimed at Canadian athletes.

In the first phase, buttons, posters, bookmarks, athletes' brochures and interactive theatre sketches promoting messages of respect for all were developed. The theatre company, A Smile At the Foot of the Ladder Productions Ltd., will perform the theatrical sketches. The material will be evaluated at the Canada Games through interviews with athletes, coaches and games managers. This will be supplemented by focus groups with athletes, surveys and Post-Games sessions with provincial and territorial government representatives.

The feedback will result in the refining of these learning tools after the Games. The materials will then be distributed to national and provincial sports organizations. By March 1996, a computer-based learning and research tool will also be developed and distributed to schools and sports organizations in co-operation with a private sector sponsor.

Information:

Artur Wilczynski
Office of the Secretary of State (Multiculturalism)
(819) 953-8046

Azhar Ali Khan, Media
Relations
Canadian Heritage
(819) 994-5602

